



Promoting smart, fair food policy for New York

For Immediate Release

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## **East Harlem Community Based Organizations Join Hunter College to Improve Local Food Environments**

**NEW YORK, N.Y.** - (February 3, 2015) **The New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College**, the CUNY School of Public Health and 10 East Harlem community organizations have partnered to offer an innovative workshop designed to prepare participants to take action to improve local food environments. The semester-long workshop, which begins on February 3, brings together Hunter and CUNY master's and doctoral students and representatives from East Harlem community organizations to work to reduce diet-related diseases and food insecurity and promote food-related community and economic development in a New York City neighborhood hard hit by food-related problems. This spring semester, the Food Policy Center has selected ten representatives from a diverse group of East Harlem community organizations to serve as East Harlem Community Food Fellows. Fellows will attend the *East Harlem Research Action Workshop* to work with students to plan, develop and implement projects in the community. The Fellows each have experience working in East Harlem and will work collaboratively to develop solutions to some of the community's most pressing food needs. Classes will be held at the Silberman Building, a new Hunter College campus in East Harlem.

The 2015 Community Fellows and their organizations are:

1. **Judy Chang** – As the Special Projects Coordinator at the Harlem District Public Health Office of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Ms. Chang's work focuses on food justice, access and nutrition education. She has an interest in exploring the creation of a community-cooking program in Harlem modeled after the City's Shape UP NY program.
2. **Hannah Coakley** – Ms. Coakley is the current Food Justice Program Coordinator at Children's Aid Society. She is interested in improving access to healthy food for the East Harlem residents and educating youth about food justice.
3. **James Garcia** - Mr. Garcia is an active community resident and a Community Board 11 member appointed by Scott Stringer and Manhattan Borough President Gail Brewer to the CB 11 Community Advisory Board. He hopes to utilize his relationships with local elected officials to improve the food environment for community members.
4. **Sara Gatanas** – Ms. Gatanas works at the family-owned Urban Garden Center located on 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue in East Harlem just north of La Marqueta, East Harlem's public food market. She has helped spearhead several community projects at La Marqueta including a Youthmarket in partnership with GrowNYC and the annual East Harlem Harvest Festival. Ms. Gatanas is organizing a group in the community to create a Food Coop to increase access to healthy foods.
5. **Maxine Getz** – The former Food Justice Program Coordinator at Children's Aid Society, Ms. Getz has experience developing curricula for youth about food justice education. She is interested in engaging youth in challenging marketing of unhealthy food in the community.
6. **Lisa Herron** – Ms. Herron is a Project Coordinator at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. She has taken the lead on food-related work with the Partnership for a Healthier NYC – Manhattan coalition. These projects include food retail interventions in five large grocery stores in East Harlem, the development of an Urban Agriculture Toolkit, and highlighting the work of local farms and gardens in the community.



7. **Tawnya Ridi** – Currently working as the chef and nutritionist at SMART University (Sisterhood Mobilized for AIDS/HIV Research & Treatment), Ms. Ridi teaches women to prepare healthy and nutritious recipes using affordable produce available in the community. Utilizing Participatory Budgeting funding, Ms. Ridi is working with SMART to create programming for a new Mobile Cooking Classroom, which will provide culturally appropriate nutrition and cooking classes.
8. **Johnny Rivera** –Mr. Rivera is the Director of Community and Government Affairs for Harlem RBI and a long-time resident and advocate for health in East Harlem. He moderated the first and only community forum at Corsi/LaGuardia Houses to discuss the benefits of the Pathmark Supermarket relocation to 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue. Mr. Rivera is interested in exploring ways to ensure access to healthy and affordable foods for East Harlem residents.
9. **Paola Sanchez** – Ms. Sanchez works with Corbin Hill Farm Project, an organization founded with the purpose of supplying fresh food where it is needed most – including East Harlem. She is interested in exploring ways to revitalize La Marqueta and documenting changes in food policies in East Harlem over the past decade.
10. **Annette Slonim** –Ms. Slonim is the Program and Community Coordinator with the Edible Schoolyard team at PS/MS 7 and Global Tech Prep in East Harlem. Annette is interested in integrating her work at Edible Schoolyard with current local initiatives around youth engagement and food.

The faculty who will lead the workshop are Nicholas Freudenberg, Distinguished Professor of Public Health, and Nevin Cohen, an Associate Professor of Health Policy at CUNY. They have each spent decades studying food and urban policy, diet-related disease and food insecurity and hunger, and conducting community-based research in New York City. “This course offers Hunter College and the CUNY School of Public Health an opportunity to learn from our East Harlem neighbors and to work with them to solve our neighborhood’s most pressing health and social problems,” said Freudenberg. “By blending local and public health expertise on food and food policy, we hope to make progress in translating the growing knowledge on how to improve food environments into action in our community.”

The East Harlem Community Food Fellows Programs is supported by an award from the Tisch Illumination Fund to the New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College to improve food environments in East Harlem. The fellowship provides either tuition reimbursement for Fellows who want to use the workshop to earn university credit or a stipend to their sponsoring organization.

The New York City Food Policy Center develops intersectoral, innovative and evidence-based solutions to preventing diet-related diseases and promoting food security in New York and other cities. The Center works with policy makers, community organizations, advocates and the public to create healthier, more sustainable food environments and to use food to promote community and economic development. Through interdisciplinary research, policy analysis, evaluation and education, we leverage the expertise and passion of the students, faculty and staff of Hunter College and CUNY. The Center aims to make New York a model for smart, fair food policy.

For more information regarding the East Harlem Research Action Workshop, including last year’s projects visit <http://nycfoodpolicy.org/east-harlem-research-action-workshop/> or contact Diana Johnson, Director of Community Projects: [dj@nycfoodpolicy.org](mailto:dj@nycfoodpolicy.org)

For more information about the NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College and to subscribe to the Center’s e-newsletter, contact [info@nycfoodpolicy.org](mailto:info@nycfoodpolicy.org).

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